

ACCOUNTANTS CALLS FOR ACTION ON CSR REPORTING

Brussels, 09 June 2004: The European Federation of Accountants, FEE, is today calling on the European Commission's Multi-stakeholder Forum to give Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) reporting the same level of recognition as financial reporting. CSR reporting typically sees corporations reporting on their economic, social and environmental impacts.

FEE believes that independent assurance is central to building the credibility of CSR reports. Urgent action is required if CSR reporting is to attain the same level of investor recognition as that received by high quality financial reporting.

In addition to the Multi-stakeholder Forum, FEE believes that action is required from corporations, standard setters, assurance providers, sustainability indexes and NGOs.

Commenting on the launch of the issues paper FEE Call for Action: Assurance for Sustainability, Chairman of the FEE Sustainability Assurance Group, Mr. Lars-Olle Larsson stressed that: "CSR reporting without assurance, is rightly seen as little more than advertising. FEE, which represents leading practitioners in CSR reporting, believes that credible assurance is the key to increasing confidence in such reporting in the eyes of the world's capital markets."

FEE President David Devlin noted that: "FEE is taking a proactive approach to achieving the goal of widely accepted CSR reporting. Such reporting requires high quality reporting and assurance standards."

FEE's paper builds on the accountancy profession's acknowledged CSR reporting and assurance expertise. FEE believes that:

- Corporations should seek independent assurance on their CSR reports.**
- Corporations and assurers should disclose sufficient information to stakeholders regarding independence of the assurance provider.**
- GRI, (the global standard setter for sustainability reporting), should ensure that the nature of indicators and other disclosures do not preclude assurance. GRI should also encourage reporters to improve disclosure relating to internal assurance and its relationship with external assurance.**
- Sustainability Indexes (e.g. FTSE4GOOD; Dow Jones Sustainability Index) when rating a company, they should consider whether CSR reports have received assurance.**
- NGOs and other stakeholder organisations should increase their members' awareness of the issue of assurance and fully engage with standard setters.**
- The European Commission and national governments should monitor reactions to CSR legislation in France, Denmark and Sweden.**
- National standard setters should examine whether there is a need for a national standard on assurance for sustainability.**

- Ends -

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Notes for Editors:

1. The new publication **FEE Call for Action: Assurance for Sustainability** can be downloaded free-of-charge from the FEE website (<http://www.fee.be>) or copies may be ordered from Sylvie Romancide (Fax: + 32 2 231 11 12, Email: Sylvie_Romancide@fee.be).
2. FEE is a leading player in the Sustainability debate. Relevant publications include: **Benefits of Sustainability Assurance (2003)**; **Fact Sheet on Greenhouse Gasses and the Accountancy Profession (2002)**; and the **Discussion Paper Providing Assurance on Sustainability Reports (2002)**. All of the aforementioned publications can be downloaded free-of-charge from the FEE website (<http://www.fee.be>)
3. For more info. about the European Commission's Multi-stakeholder forum on CSR:
http://www.forum.europa.eu.int/irc/empl/csr_eu_multi_stakeholder_forum/info/data/en/csr%20ems%20forum.htm
4. The **Fédération des Experts Comptables Européens (FEE)** is the representative organisation for the accountancy profession in Europe. FEE's membership consists of 41 professional institutes of accountants from 29 countries. FEE member bodies represent more than 500,000 accountants in Europe. Roughly 45% of these accountants work in public practice, providing a wide range of services to clients. The other 55% work in various capacities in industry, commerce, government and education.